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Trauma In Refugee And Immigrant Students: A Website Resource For Educators

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TRAUMA IN REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT STUDENTS:
A WEBSITE RESOURCE FOR EDUCATORS

by

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English as a Second Language.

Hamline University

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An immigrant leaves his homeland to find greener grass.

A refugee leaves his homeland because the grass is burning under his feet.

--Barbara Law and Mary Eckes

“If English learners are to be successful in schools,
all teachers need to become language teachers.”

--Ann Mabbott, Professor, Hamline University

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

If you teach refugee or immigrant K-12 learners in the United States' schools, then perhaps you were asked disturbing questions after the presidential election of Donald Trump, such as, "Will my family be punished because we are Muslim?" "Will we be sent back?" "What will happen to me if my mom is deported?" "Is my father going to jail because he is not American?" "Can my Bibi (grandmother) in Iraq visit us ever again in my whole life?" These are only a few examples of questions my students asked me as my eyes strained back tears and my head swirled with rational explanations.

With these questions in mind I began searching the school district website for help or suggestions. Our district has some resources for cultural inquiries but nothing regarding trauma in students, specifically refugee or immigrant students. In searching the worldwide web, I found a plethora of articles pertaining to trauma in refugees and immigrants but nothing providing help for the classroom teachers or school staff of this no longer unique population in this new century. Therefore, my research question came quite naturally: How can I provide a web-based resource for educators and administrators to learn more about traumatized refugee and immigrant students?

Student Applications

This academic year we supported 84 English learners (ELs) in an elementary school of 500 students. This is a suburban school in a district in the Midwest. If the past election of 2016 did not traumatize this population of students then they may have

experienced trauma in a multitude of other ways, either directly or indirectly through stories of war or torture involving family or friends.

My K-5 elementary ELs are a mix of native-born, refugee, and immigrant students from around the globe. The Center for Victims of Torture believes trauma to be from not only a physical accident, punishment, or torture, but it can also be used to describe situations or experiences that are distressing or emotionally painful. I believe my students have been experiencing trauma from the recent election. How have the mainstream teachers been handling post-election questions? Did the mainstream teachers have a resource to assist them with traumatized students other than administration, school social worker, or EL teacher?

The trauma-fueled situations have been escalating in my building since the last presidential election of Donald Trump. SLAM! (A few seconds of silence.) SLAM! (A few seconds of silence.) SLAM! One of my Somali students had run from his classroom and slammed the door on his way out as well as the next two open doors down the school hallway. I could hear staff walkie-talkies identifying the student by his initials and the hallway monitors securing sight of the school building's exterior doors so he would not exit the building. Hour after hour, day after day, another outburst, another scramble, a different student, the same student, it didn't seem to have any predictability. Why? Why are we not able to understand these students and their anger? What is the role of the teacher in situations like these? How can I help the students and their teachers? Is there a way to connect mainstream teachers and school administrators with a convenient resource to provide information to help these students?

Classroom Applications

Teachers are trained to work within the norm population. However, when a student is enrolled in an American school, it is the job of the educator to help him or her learn regardless of his or her background. Many teacher education programs include general education requirements, extensive study in the content area, several education classes that focus on the art of teaching, and exceptional learner pedagogy. The exceptional learner curriculum may include information about gifted and talented students, special education, or English as a Second Language (ESL). In particular, ESL classes provide a language-focused instruction with a couple classes about assessment and advocacy. With no counseling or trauma-sensitive training, it appears educators are ill equipped to deal with students who may be or have experience trauma. Although it may not be in a teacher's job description to help a student work through a traumatic event, *Lau vs. Nichols (1974)* states we are legally obligated: *To provide an equal opportunity, in certain cases it may be necessary to accommodate differing needs* (Crawford, 2008).

School Applications

My school is in a suburban area of a large Midwest metropolitan area. We currently have 518 students enrolled in grades K-5. Of these, 16.2 percent (84) students participate in our ESL program, and 65 percent (336) qualify for free or reduced priced lunch. Our school also participates in a free breakfast program in which every student, regardless of income level, receives free breakfast daily.

More than half of our student body is White (63 percent) with our second highest population being Black (15 percent). The remaining is divided equally between Asian and Hispanic at 7 percent each, and 1 percent Native American. Also, our student body includes a 7 percent population of students with two or more races. We have experienced a noticeable decline in the percentage of students “on track” for success since 2013. In 2013 we had 70 percent on-track, and in 2016, only 60 percent. However, our 64 percent proficiency in reading is the same as the entire district, while the state average is only 60 percent. In math and science we have 64 percent proficiency while the district has 67 percent proficiency, and the state average shows only 61 percent proficiency according to state testing (Minnesota Department of Education, 2016). After English, our school’s top home languages are Somali, Arabic, Spanish, and Hmong. Our most recent EL students are from Somalia, Iraq, and Mexico.

I find it important to mention within this discussion on refugee and immigrant students the traumatic conditions under which they have entered our school building. A refugee child has undergone traumatic events just to get into America. An immigrant child may have migrated with his or her parents in the initial trip overseas to our soil, or had been sent for by the established parent or parents. The child of an immigrant or refugee may have never experienced a traumatic event firsthand in their home country or country of refuge, but may be the victim of secondary trauma, or the effects of parental trauma as transmitted to the descendants, affecting health and well-being. I have witnessed this transference in a few students. After hearing some of the parents tragic stories of war injuries and stabbings by secret police, they would always seem to mention that they are “safe here in America now, no problems with stress.” I disagree. I believe

they need help for the wounds they have suffered externally and internally. It is this group of parents, children who are the most in need of help in my building. Their behaviors include biting other children, throwing objects at teachers, running out of the room, jabbing pencils into other students' hands, slamming doors, displaying a fist or middle finger to anyone, and so many other outward signs of a troubled mind. A troubled mind is being raised by an even more troubled mind. Secondary trauma is invisible but manifests in abusive ways implying that only the affected need help. The entire family needs help. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) explains that Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) refers to the presence of PTSD symptoms caused by at least one indirect exposure to material which is traumatic (2007).

Family Roles

Parent involvement is a Western middle-class idea. Therefore, the mainstream idea of “parental involvement” may not easily translate to refugee or immigrant families. I remember a very adamant Russian parent once telling my EL colleague, “I NOT come to parent-teacher conference, and something wrong with my child, you tell me, I COME to the school.” Immigrant parents bring their own beliefs, cultural values, and behaviors regarding their role with respect to their children's schooling. If I am asking parents or families to change their behaviors, it helps me to know their underlying beliefs or experiences and what these behaviors mean to them. I believe educators and administrators first need to establish adequate trust, and that this foundation of trust is the first step towards engaging parents.

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) goes deeper with insights into engagement and empowerment of families from other countries. NASP

informs us that these families have different views about education, including the assumption that education remains the duty of the school, and any involvement with parents encroaches on that responsibility. I have witnessed, and NASP supports, the fact some families may not be proficient enough in English to know how to engage, despite a desire to do so (2015). In addition, many of our families experience practical barriers such as not owning a car or having employment that allows for active engagement during school hours. I work with our district cultural liaison and school social worker to find ways to connect with parents and ensure they have opportunities to participate in their child's schooling. For instance, I have requested taxi service to transport parents to events, and next fall I am hosting an orientation hour for Somali and Arabic families to learn about the basics of their children's schooling. Interpreters will be present, and it will incorporate a question and answer session regarding parent-teacher conferences, volunteer opportunities, and a host of other school-related events.

I have found all immigrant and refugee parents say they want their children to have a better life in their new country but, understandably, they may have difficulties converting these hopes and dreams into involvement that is effective in the new context. Kia-Keating and Ellis support this declaration by addressing the fact that refugee and immigrant parents differ in terms of their former experiences with education. As an example, families who come from rural settings often have lower levels of formal education. The families also differ in terms of how much emphasis they currently place upon education as a means of improving their children's lives (2007). For refugee and immigrant families, school plays a vital role in their new story.

Education and safety seem to be the major motivating factors for several new families. I have often seen my EL families view school as the primary source for English acquisition, acculturation, and socialization. Moreno and Chuang support my experience of incorporating immigrant parents into the schooling of their children as a complex process, one that is not well captured by many of the current parent involvement models (p. 239).

Although no known preventive interventions to improve parental involvement in education have been tested in refugees and immigrants, several varying interventions have been evaluated in non-refugee populations. Henderson and Mapp (2002) claim there are promising findings regarding school outreach to families. Also, respect and understanding the cultural differences of families builds trust within family, school, and community relationships.

Summary

The purpose of this capstone project is to launch a website for educators and administrators as a resource to aid the creation of a trauma-aware classroom and school environment. My goal in creating this website is for its utilization by everyone who has a stake in the education of traumatized immigrant, refugee, and native-born EL students.

The website will also serve as a cultural profile and resource tool. Users may learn more about a specific population within our district with tips to support the refugee and immigrant students they serve. While there are many resources available about the effects of trauma on success in school, there are not many resources teachers can use efficiently in the classroom.

Research about refugee and immigrant students in U.S. schools is generally focused on the immigrant students. Although both groups of students may be similar in many respects, it is important to highlight that typically, the refugee children face much more difficult adjustment issues in schools. This adjustment is due to the possibility of interrupted or minimal experiences with formal schooling (Kirova, 2001). In addition to the behavioral and schooling issues I have witnessed, immigrant and refugee students face numerous difficulties such as a lack of experience and proficiency in reading, in writing, and speaking English. They also fall short with unfamiliarity of the expectations from their teachers, and a lack of resources at home, in school, and the community.

In this chapter I introduced the fact there is a lack of resources for educators and administration to assist (academically and socially) traumatized students with a refugee or immigrant background. It also included applications for students, classrooms, schools and families. Chapter Two contains a review of the literature about definitions and backgrounds of refugees and immigrants in America, national and state implications, challenges in educating refugee and immigrant students, and strategies for educating refugee and immigrant students. Chapter Three describes the project using research-based web design with usability guidelines, my intended audience, and a brief content description of the website. Chapter Four will be a description of how the proposed website will contribute to public scholarship and contains a reflection of the project and conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Literature and online research regarding trauma are extensive, along with information regarding refugee and immigrant students in the United States. What is not as apparent are websites with facts combined with pedagogy related to this contemporary population. How can I provide a web-based resource for educators and administrators to learn more about traumatized refugee and immigrant students? Conducting a review of the literature for trauma in refugee and immigrant students will aid my development of a website for educators and administrators in my building, potentially the school district, and my home state.

Background of Refugees and Immigrants in America

In order to consider the background of refugees and immigrants in the United States, it helps to understand the definition of these terms. An immigrant, by definition, is someone who moves permanently to another country (Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 2016). While America often defines itself as a "nation of immigrants," our history of settlement and slavery challenges this narrative.

Throughout our history, U.S. laws have excluded some people, based on their race or nationality, from immigration and citizenship. Episodes of Japanese internment (during World War II) and mass deportation of people of Mexican heritage (during the depression and later in the 1950s) do not support community responses to the rhetoric of today. According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the Immigration and Nationality Act, or INA, was created in 1952. Prior to INA, a variety of

statutes governed immigration law but they had never been organized in one location. The McCarran-Walter bill of 1952, Public Law No. 82-414, collected and classified many existing provisions and reorganized the framework of immigration law. This Act has been amended multiple times but remains the foundation of immigration law.

According to the USCIS, a refugee is someone living outside of the United States but who is not established in another country, is of humanitarian concern to the U.S., and it can be demonstrated that he or she had been persecuted, or feared persecution, due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a social group (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2017). Of course, these broad definitions can be broken down into several specific categories. However, people in either of these groups may have experienced trauma. It is imperative not to make assumptions about an individual or family member's history based on his or her immigration status. However, defining these terms is helpful when assessing areas of potential trauma.

Trauma has been defined as events that “overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning...they confront human beings with the extremities of helplessness and terror and evoke the responses of catastrophe” (Herman, 1997, p.34). Because trauma is defined by the way a person reacts to events, trauma to one person may not be trauma to another. Some people can cope with the trauma and move forward quickly. However, many trauma survivors continue to struggle with their sense of control, connection, and meaning for the majority of their lives. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network explains elementary-aged children may experience changes in their behavior such as aggression, anger, irritability, withdrawal from other, and sadness. Not only do they have trouble at school, they may

also have trouble with friends at home. Many children have a fear of separation from their parents or fear of something bad happening (2007).

State and National Implications

Examination of immigration statistics is helpful to predict how other students may be experiencing parallel stressors to those of the refugee and immigrant students in my Midwestern school. According to the Department of Homeland Security's yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 1,930,137 people were admitted to the United States in 2015 via lawful permanent residency, refugee status, naturalization, or asylum (2016). Even though my state's immigration population is lower than the national average, 8 percent compared to the nation's 13 percent, the state's foreign-born population is increasing faster than the national average (Minnesota Compass, 2017). Immigrants are among the fastest growing populations in my state, growing by 76 percent since 2000, compared with a 12 percent growth rate for the state's population overall. In my state nearly 1 in 6 children, ages 0-19, has at least one immigrant parent. Among our youngest residents, ages 0-4, almost 1 in every 5 is a child of an immigrant. The largest immigrant populations in the state, at this time, are from Mexico, India, Laos, Somalia, Vietnam, Thailand (including Hmong), China, Korea, Ethiopia, and Liberia (Minnesota Compass, 2017). Certainly many of our newest state residents, both refugee and immigrants, have experienced trauma.

For the past couple years, there has been more coverage of the Syrian refugee crisis spilling into Europe. According to Arrive Ministries (2015), more than five years into the Syrian Civil War, displacement has increased and solutions seem far-fetched. Large areas of Syria have been under the control of the Islamic State (ISIS) with little

opposition. More than 7.6 million Syrians are internally displaced, while another four or five million have sought refuge in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. These 12 million displaced people represent more than 50 percent of the total Syrian population and are equivalent in number to the homeless found in my state and our neighboring state to the east. The refugees have abandoned their homes because it is too dangerous to stay, and many say there is nothing left for them in Syria. The Syrian people have had their homes looted and destroyed when their towns are occupied. The people who have fled have lost their savings and can see no end to the violence. While my state is not currently a major Syrian refugee destination (due to a small established Syrian-American community) it has been an exceptionally good place for refugees in general. My state maintains a strong job market, affordable housing, public transportation, quality schools, and a generally welcoming environment.

For refugees and immigrants, the journey to the United States did not begin with an airline flight. (See Appendix A). The trip was months or even years long, and was full of traumatic circumstances, painful decisions, and many displays of courage. According to World Relief Minnesota, there are four stages to the refugee and immigrant journey.

Stage One, Preflight Chaos: Before fleeing their homeland, several families must watch as the circumstances surrounding them deteriorate. They painfully consider whether or not to leave and if so, when. The challenges they face may include: increased harassment and persecution, increased violence including imprisonment, torture, executions, and destruction of their property. In addition, there is an increased probability of direct exposure to violence, such as witnessing atrocities committed against others. Many also face deprivation of basic needs, such as food and water. All of this also

increases fear and anxiety. Consideration of leaving their homeland will mean abandoning family, friends, jobs, and property; this is not an easy decision to make.

Stage Two, The Flight: After considering their options, and before the situation gets any worse, the family decides to leave their home. Some may be able to bring the entire family and may have time to plan and gather resources for the journey. Others, however, must leave in a moment's notice in order to escape possible threats of immediate danger. They face a number of challenges during their flight, such as travel on unfamiliar routes, some often mined or booby-trapped. The journey may mean deprivation of food, sleep, and shelter. Of course, infants and elderly are the most vulnerable, and many do not survive. This is part of the loss of, or separation from, family members. Many travelers may also encounter robbers or hostile populations in neighboring countries.

Stage Three, Waiting: This is an issue if the refugee or immigrant is successful. Many will come to a second country of asylum. This place may not be a place of rest. Some refugees go to camps with conditions varying widely, from orderly UN-administered camps to quickly-constructed shantytowns. In these situations they may continue experiencing political or ethnic hostilities, bombings and shootings, lack of basic necessities, overcrowded conditions, and denials for work, or choice of residence. The vast majority of refugees must return to their home countries for lack of the above. All refugees and immigrants applying to come to the United States must be subject to extreme vetting. (See Appendix B). This includes an interview with United States government and United Nations personnel. During the process, they undergo health screenings, background checks, and security clearances. As well as their applications, the

validity of their claims of identity and or possible persecution are also checked. This process can take years.

Stage Four, Resettlement: This may come if the individual is accepted for admittance. If admitted, the refugee or immigrant begins travel to the United States, and the challenges continue. Upon arrival they are overwhelmed by culture shock and culture clashes, may have difficulty finding affordable housing and a job, struggle with the need to learn English, experience the reversal of leadership roles as children learn English faster than parents, and deal with high expectations that are not often met. Even after getting through all the paper work, applications, and bureaucracy, it is a time of homesickness and dealing with the long-term effects of trauma.

Challenges to Educating Refugee and Immigrant Students

Students from immigrant and refugee backgrounds in schools, especially those with disrupted or no previous schooling, need additional support to develop the English language and learning skills necessary to succeed in American schools. Because of constant exposure to violence and trauma, students may become locked in a permanent state of fight or flight and may react to normal experiences as if they were life or death threats. The Sanctuary Institute also informs that trauma-impacted youth may have difficulty managing “big” emotions and display chronic irritability and or anxiety that interferes with problem solving. These students also have difficulty with empathy, expressing concerns and need in words, taking into account the wider context of a situation, appreciating how one’s behavior impacts others, and may struggle with working in groups and connecting with people. With thousands of immigrant and refugee students arriving in the United States each year, the educational system must find

creative and effective ways to foster the academic success of these youth (McNeely, et. al., 2017). Social belonging, McNeely emphasizes, is an especially critical factor for youth during our present sociopolitical climate which is characterized by intense debate surrounding immigration reform, the banning of Muslim immigrants and refugees, the refusal of some states to accept any refugees, and newly reinforced efforts to deport undocumented immigrants (2017, p. 122).

According to McBrien (2016), since 1975 the United States has resettled more than two million refugees, with approximately half arriving as children. The traumatic experiences refugee children may have had can obstruct their learning. The United Nations has specified in their conventions, with researchers agreeing, that education is essential for refugee and immigrant children's psychosocial adjustment. However, government officials, public opinion, and researchers have often disagreed about what is best for immigrant and refugees' healthy acculturation. Allwood (2002) states that research literature has connected immigrant and refugee children's experiences, as related to the stress and trauma associated with displacement, migration, and acculturation in the resettled country, with the disturbingly high rates of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms they may exhibit. Researchers have been connecting the catastrophic effect of war with the health and well-being of nations for generations.

Historical trauma is transferred through generations. Yoder defines historical trauma as the "cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations emanating from massive group trauma" (p. 13). Yoder continues to describe intergenerational trauma as persecution of religious groups, slavery, or colonialism. All of these traumatic events may have occurred in the past, but the effects

continue to grow and may surface with group or individual attitudes and behaviors in subsequent generations. This also has been happening for many indigenous and native tribes globally.

A few recent quotations, found by Murthy and Lakshminarayana, come from the media and demonstrate the impact of war on mental health: “We are living in a state of constant fear,” (Iraq). “War takes a toll on Iraqi mental health.” “A generation has grown up knowing only war.”

McBrien (2005) notes that many 21st century refugees and immigrants have two additional barriers that must be overcome. First, if they are from Somalia or Ethiopia, they are Black Africans demonstrating significant cultural differences from African Americans, who are often seen to be in the same cultural group as native-born White Americans. Secondly, many refugees from the Middle East, Afghanistan, and Africa are Muslims. This Islamic group has come to be feared and despised by many Americans, as this religious group has been tied to violence and terrorism.

Strategies for Educating Refugee and Immigrant Students

In a qualitative study of urban districts, Roxas (2011) found many of those districts explaining the difficulty of teaching students who have varying degrees of English proficiency and who are also placed in classrooms with little or no advance warning for the teacher. In addition, the instructors are given very little information about the student’s previous educational experience and background. Furthermore, because of the varying degrees of proficiency in English, teachers struggle to find the best ways to teach these refugee or immigrant children who may also have had limited or interrupted

experiences with formal schooling and at the same time instruct native English learners in the same classroom.

Compounding the academic roadblocks with trauma can affect the student, the teacher, and the whole building. Even though the fact that trauma has profound effects on self-esteem, confidence, and integrity, it may not seem to directly correlate to declining grades. There are many second-language acquisition theories commenting on the need for confidence in the classroom (Courtois & Ford, 2013; McDonald, 2000). When students lack confidence they may struggle with speaking but excel in reading and writing.

Trauma may affect speaking in children when coupled with anxiety. Krashen, with others, explain that when anxiety levels rise, the affective filter rises as well. The higher a student's anxiety, the less he/she may speak in class (Krashen, 1981).

Teachers also need to be aware of a few fundamental areas in which traumatized youth struggle when it comes to school. Their inability to process information often cause them to fall behind in their studies. Difficulty with forming trusting relationships with adults may produce a tense dynamic in the classroom and discourage students from asking for help or clarification when needed, which can cause dropping grades, frustration, and multiple troubles. Their difficulty differentiating between threatening and non-threatening situations, paired with their struggle to recognize and regulate their emotions, can cause them to react inappropriately to situations (Cole, et. al., 20015). Simply being sensitive to these areas of concern for traumatized students is the first step in creating a more trauma aware environment. Once aware, educators can begin taking steps to mold positive change. There are three main areas of focus for schools: to help students form positive attachments with adults, to help students enhance their self-

regulation abilities, and to help students by teaching the transference of skills across content areas (Cole, et. al., 2005).

Not only do students with trauma have difficulty being in control of themselves, they struggle to be in control of their knowledge as well. Larsen-Freeman contends that the ability to transfer knowledge into an unknown situation requires a learner to transform the information, not simply duplicate it (2013). This means the student needs to be comfortable with the information so that he or she can adjust to it. In order to assist learners with this difficult skill, teachers can create authentic situations for students to demonstrate this newly acquired knowledge. Students may need to be reminded to use newly learned information, but it is better that they get the reminder while participating in a classroom activity than miss the chance to transfer the information during a real-life situation (Larsen-Freeman, 2013).

Finding ways to help students regain their sense of control, connection, and meaning which individuals sometimes lose after experiencing trauma, is the bottom line for educators (McDonald, 2000). One of the most efficient ways of doing this is to gather information about our students. Teachers need to know the child's strengths and weaknesses, as well as language and cultural background, in order to provide meaningful and effective instruction. To aid in this task, McDonald suggests that each school have a portfolio of information that teachers can access (2000). Also, a potential aid will be the information available in my website including the current conditions in specific countries, possible concerns for the student and their family, as well as information about trauma informed pedagogy.

Other strategies for teachers working with refugee and immigrant students are suggested by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) (2006). The network recommends teachers provide a stable and comfortable environment. Students may want to ask questions; be available to listen to them and perhaps they may share some of their unique experiences.

The NCTSN also recommends teachers find a way to provide access to tutors. Extra academic help may benefit a refugee or immigrant student who may already feel stigmatized with poor academic performance. A rewarding relationship with a tutor can also provide a personal connection. Showing the mainstream class and school that diversity is welcomed and appreciated helps to provide a safer community and classroom. Teachers can display welcome signs in different languages, photographs or artifacts from different countries representing the student body, and lead group discussions within the classroom about stereotypes and prejudices (keeping the discussion generalized and not focusing on particular students).

The students in *Children of War* testified to the healing value of sharing one's story and having it taken seriously. It is important to note children may need to disclose information in their own way and in their own time. Teachers should never pressure a student to tell his or her story in a large group setting, and let your student know this powerful experience is taken seriously and appreciated. Educators and administrators must be aware that some students may react to trauma by acting out, and others may become withdrawn. It is important to pay as much attention to the quieter students as to those who are acting out.

The NCTSN also suggests to make sure school and classroom rules are clear and consistent. Some behaviors American teachers might take for granted, such as the need for promptness or a quiet classroom, may not be as obvious to a student from a different culture. If a student continues to have trouble, consider a referral to the school social worker to assess when the “acting out” is the result of traumatic stress or other emotional issues.

Gaps in Research

As revealed in this literature review, there is an ample amount of research about the trauma experienced by refugee and immigrant students and the ways in which it may affect their education. We know there are a variety of types of trauma that may be experienced along the immigration journey. However, the literature offers few suggestions for teachers and administrators to learn more about their traumatized refugee and immigrant students. It is my intention to create website to connect, not separate, the traumatized refugee and immigrant students with their educators.

Summary

As the literature indicates, traumatized immigrant and refugee students may have a multitude of needs, and their symptoms of trauma may manifest in different ways. As teachers, it is not in our job description to diagnose or treat trauma. It is, however, our job to ensure that all students get an education. With this information presented, I maintain the need to create: *a website with information for educators and administrators to best serve the needs of our growing traumatized immigrant and refugee student population.*

This chapter defined refugees and immigrants and described various legal statuses pertaining to the two groups. It highlighted the background of refugees and immigrants in

America, national and state implications, challenges to educating refugee and immigrant students, strategies for educating refugee and immigrant students, and gaps in research.

Chapter Three is a description of the project using research-based web design and usability guidelines, my intended audience, and a brief content description of the website. Chapter Four will be a description of how the projected website will contribute to public scholarship, with a reflection of the project and conclusion.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

How can I provide a web-based resource for educators and administrators to learn more about traumatized refugee and immigrant students? This chapter includes the project method and description, project content, research-based web design, and project timeline.

Project Method

The method I have chosen for answering my research question is to develop a website with the information needed for everyone who has a stake in the education of traumatized refugee and immigrant students. A web-resource is readily available in classrooms and school offices for my colleagues and administration. It is also my intention to share this website about trauma in refugee and immigrant students within my school district. Anderson and Rainie claim that information sharing over the Internet will be so effortlessly interwoven into daily life that it will become invisible, flowing like electricity, often through machine intermediaries (2014).

Project Description

I describe my project as a website about trauma in refugee and immigrant students. This web-based resource will aid classroom teachers and administration. I will include my capstone paper content with literature review, methods, and cited references. The website will also include links to important resources such as cultural norms of Minnesota refugee and immigrant populations, vetting procedures for immigrants, and links to materials and training for trauma healing.

The most important issues when considering how to develop and design a website, according to Leavitt and Schneiderman (2006), is to set clear and concise goals for the site, ensure the website meets user's expectations and provide useful content. My capstone project audience will be the educators and administration of my school building and potentially the entire school district. The website I design will have information helpful for my school, school district, home state, and include facts pertaining to the entire nation.

Chapter Two defined refugees and immigrants and described various legal statuses pertaining to the two groups. It highlighted the background of refugee and immigrants in America, national and state implications, challenges to educating refugee and immigrant students, strategies for educating refugee and immigrant students, and gaps in research. This chapter is a description of the capstone project using research-based web design and usability guidelines, my intended audience, and a brief content description of the website. Chapter Four will be a description of how the projected website will contribute to public scholarship with a reflection of the project and conclusion.

Project Content

I included in my website the definitions of trauma as it pertains to refugee and immigrant students and their families, information regarding the necessary vetting procedures for entry into the United States, and facts regarding the numbers of refugee and immigrants in my home state and the nation. I will also include the reasoning behind refugee and immigrant challenges in education, strategies for educators and

administrators both academically and socially, and best practices for this unique population.

As I have been influenced by the climate in my school, I will also add a section about the common cultural norms of the many populations residing in my home state. This will include Somali, Mexican, Iraqi, and several others. The educators and administrators will have exposure to a culture's traditional beliefs on health and medicine, gender issues, religion, communication styles, personal space and social gestures, and familial structures. This will help staff members with a vested interest to find understanding and potential hot spots.

My website resources include scholarly-based research, community center resources, and agencies dedicated to the transition, care, and well-being of refugee and immigrant individuals and families. The web-based resources reach my metro area and Midwest region.

Research-based Web Design

A research-based web design and set of usability guidelines were published in 2006 by Leavitt and Shneiderman to assist those involved in the production of websites to be able to base their decision-making on the best available and most current evidence. This is particularly important to the design of information-based sites, such as the one I will create. The original audience, for these particular guidelines, was the United States Health and Human Services Department. However, they are useful to all who collect, organize, and distribute information in a usable format.

My project is the development of a website for educators and administration regarding the instance of trauma in refugee and immigrant students in grades K-12. The Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia has established a framework of six criteria to apply to the content of the website rather than the graphics or web design. The Dalhousie publication encourages the application of the following criteria to all research done on the internet (2017).

The first criterion is to evaluate a web site for authority. Authority discloses that the person, institution, or agency responsible for a site has the qualifications and knowledge to do so. Evaluation includes authorship: it is clear who developed the site. Contact information should be clearly provided: e-mail address, mailing address, phone number, and fax number. Credentials of the author must state their qualifications, credentials, or personal background that gives them the authority to supply information. A user of the site should also check to see if the site is supported by an organization or commercial interest.

The second criterion is purpose. The purpose of the information displayed in the site must be clear. Each site is meant to inform, persuade, state an opinion, entertain, or parody something or someone. Judging a website for purpose includes checking the content to determine if it supports the purpose of the site. Does the information have purpose for the intended audience? The site must be organized, focused, and external links must be appropriate for the site.

The third set of criteria is coverage. Through the use of links, it is difficult to assess the extent of coverage in a site as it may be infinite. However, topics can be checked to determine if they are explored in depth, and the question asked as to whether

or not the links go to outside sites rather than internally. Perhaps the site provides information with absolutely no relevant external links.

The fourth criterion evaluates the currency, if the information is up-to-date and correctly labeled. Currency evaluation involves determining the date information was first written, placed on the web, and last revised. This also includes asking if the links are up-to-date, reliable, timely, and how long the site has been under construction.

The fifth criterion is objectivity. The objectivity of the site must be clear. Beware of biased sites or those that do not admit their bias openly. An objective site presents information with a minimum of bias. Checking for objectivity includes looking for biased information that is trying to sway the audience, advertising that conflicts with the content, and whether or not the site tries to explain, inform, persuade, or sell something.

The final criterion is applying accuracy. Accuracy is found by checking the site's reliability, references, comparability to other sites of the same subject, if basic rules of grammar, spelling and composition are followed, and if the site lists a bibliography or references.

Project Timeline

The Capstone Project timeline began with a rough draft of the first three chapters: Introduction, Literature Review, and Methods. My professor and I decided to have a methods chapter for explanation of the website and its development. A website design was the next step and I researched several options: paying a web developer, employing a tech-savvy friend or relative, or even pursue the offer of a free web design for someone on Craigslist who was in pursuit of filling up their portfolio. The free option was bogus

and the web developers wanted hundreds or thousands of dollars. I sent an email to the technology facilitator at my school district and he replied with my answer. I manage a website of my own already. My classroom teacher website based on the main website for my school building. I am able to access and maintain this website for the duration of my employment with the district until I retire. I met with the technology person and he spent one afternoon teaching me how to create a website for Trauma in Refugee and Immigrant Students: A Web-based Resource for Educators.

Both the technology facilitator and communications specialist assisted with my questions and suggestions. The website is to be used by anyone in the district for the benefit of all students so it was approved by the technology and communications departments with enthusiasm. The website is accessible at any time, day or night, by anyone with access to the internet and worldwide web. The website has a built-in counter which displays how many “hits” or times a site has been visited. The time period it counts goes month-by-month, or may be adjusted by me for assessment purposes. The website was released to the public prior to my presentation for the professor and my colleagues. I provided the website address to all present and my professor forwarded the address on a group email. <https://www.ahschools.us/adamschoustman>

CHAPTER FOUR: REFLECTION

My Capstone project, as the final requirement for a Masters in English as a Second Language, was exhilarating, confusing, frustrating, and mostly challenging. How can I provide a web-based resource for educators and administrators to learn more about traumatized refugee and immigrant students? The project seemed to unfold before me. It was all part of a plan to support the mainstream teachers and administrators in my elementary school building. After the presidential election of Donald Trump, several of my English Learner (EL) students acted negatively out of fear for their futures in America, both socially and academically. I determined a web-based resource dedicated to the needs of this population was the best solution. It was exhilarating, confusing, and frustrating to create a whole new website. The challenge commenced.

What? I never attempted such a project. I have been an educator of ELs, not an Informational Technology specialist! The confusion came when I committed to this project but had no clue as to how to develop a website. The frustration mounted as I searched for website development and how to implement the design appropriate for my school. I needed process development, research-based web design and resources, plus a plan for future usage and maintenance of the capstone project. The challenge continued.

Project Development

The process of developing the website began when I phoned and emailed a few web designers. The price quotes for web design ranged from thousands of dollars to free.

I never received email back from the free offer. I pursued gathering information from district educators, my capstone project professors, and web-savvy friends and relatives. I learned details about web design, website and maintenance of website costs, and the more I would pay, the more help I would receive. What is my best option? An email to my school district technology facilitator was the answer. In fact, this wizard revealed that I held the secret the whole time. I could use my free and maintainable district-based teacher website!

My teacher website was found on my district website in the pages of my school website under “Classroom Teacher Websites”. To edit the site I got access to the “Site Manager” system. I made an appointment with our technology facilitator to instruct development of my new website. The facilitator sensed I was rattled and calmly went through every entry step-by-step; adding every click, every word, and SAVE, necessary to begin creating.

The first addition to my website was the title and introduction of my capstone paper. We added “Trauma in Refugee and Immigrant Students” to my teacher website homepage. The first step was challenging. I needed to gain confidence to add the remaining information to my newly created beast. I kept in mind my purpose, the foundation of this entire capstone project, “This would make it easily accessible to all teachers and administrators in my building, the district, even the entire worldwide web!”

I learned to create a website from many hours of trial and error, cutting and pasting, using dueling computers, saving resources to the correct system, and coaching from experienced and very patient people. The greatest challenge came from combining the use of a Chromebook with that of a PC. I learned that using one computer would be

the best method of production. However, the Chromebook was useful for immediate access to research and resources

As my website began to take shape, I kept in mind the framework of six criteria noted in Chapter Three regarding research-based web design. The Dalhousie publication (2017) established this framework for application to the content of the website rather than the graphics or web design. The criteria provided evaluation of authority, which means, the author of the site holds the qualifications and knowledge to develop the site. Purpose is the second criterion which demonstrates the clarity of the information contained in the site. The site was created to inform and the information revealed supports the purpose of the site. In addition, the site required to contain the information for the purpose of the intended audience. Purpose is also demonstrated through organization, focus, and the external links must be appropriate for the site.

Coverage was the third set of criterion. Coverage of external links of the website were infinite, however, the topics were checked to determine if they were explored in depth. I wanted to make certain my site provided information with relevant external links. The fourth criterion I checked was currency. I examined if the information was up-to-date and correctly labeled. I also insured the links were reliable, updated, and timely. The next criterion involved objectivity. The objectivity of the site was made clear. I was fully aware of biased sites or those that did not admit their bias openly. My objectiveness supplied the site with a minimum of bias. My inspection for objectivity included looking for biased information that may sway my audience, advertising that conflicted with the content, and whether or not my site explained and informed my understanding of trauma in refugee and immigrant students.

The final criterion concerned the application of accuracy. I checked the reliability of references, comparability to other sites of the same topic, basic rules of grammar, spelling, and composition were followed. The site also listed references and web-based resources. By following this criterion, I was able to have confidence in the reliability and validity of my website.

Leavitt and Shneiderman (2006) published guidelines for research-based web design and usability guidelines. Most of the Dalhousie (2017) publication is evident in those guidelines. The Leavitt and Shneiderman guidelines were far more in-depth and helped me to add optimizing the user experience, include the accessibility awareness of Section 508 for users needing assistive technology, check design for compatibility of browser differences, attend to page layouts, navigation, scrolling and paging, headings, titles, and labels, and text appearance. Of importance in my web design is the fact that I had to comply with the font style, text size, and overall appearance to match that of my school district website. After inspection and approval by the school district I was awarded a Uniform Resource Locator (URL), also known as my website address: <https://www.ahschools.us/adamschoustman>. After publication of the website I received a phone call from our district cultural liaison. She suggested I remove all additions of the name, Donald Trump. Our district is bipartisan and must not reflect such bias as reiterating the name of our new president. I removed his name from the website.

Reflection as Researcher, Writer, Learner

As a researcher I learned to keep the topic as narrow as possible without eliminating key details. My topic allowed for unlimited research in the field of trauma for children. I kept narrowing it by adding the keywords: immigrants and refugee students.

As a writer I learned to continually check my writing for bias and fact-based writing. The emotions have been wrapped up in the trauma of refugee and immigrant students. My students are my passion, and I needed to present my research through the eyes of the audience. As the liaison in my school district pointed out to me, keep it bipartisan and without bias. Not an easy task after the past presidential election but I kept myself in check. A research-based web design and set of usability guidelines were published in 2006 by Leavitt and Shneiderman to assist in the production of the website which guided my decision-making on the best available and most current evidence. As a learner I did not expect to find the development of a web-based resource so logical and that I had the ability to create such a project. The set-up for the site through my school district website was relatively manageable as I had worked on creating my classroom teacher web page in the past and adding on to it was not impossible. I learned to create one section of the website at a time and not try to do it all at once. I also learned to ask for help. I was faced with some questions that I did not have the answers for. I sought out the best resources to gain the best answers.

The literature review allowed me to be able to connect research with real-world solutions or at very least, suggestions for solutions. Using the population statistics provided by Minnesota Compass (2017) allowed proof of the escalation of refugee and immigrant populations in our immediate area. The facts from McBrien (2005), regarding the educational barriers that are faced by refugee and immigrants children, connected the problems, with solutions. The solutions offered by the Roxas (2011) qualitative study for educators of this population, also empathize with these teachers. My website continued

the offering with more suggestions from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, among several others.

My new connections and understandings with the literature review involve the more current problems needs current solutions. The issue of trauma is not new but some of the experiences of the student refugee and immigrants are new and need contemporary solutions academically and socially.

Future Implications and Limitations

Other than demonstrating the need for a web-based resource in my building and the school district educators and administrators, this project also allows for the addition and deletion of information as determined by website feedback. Political and educational policies are formed, modified, and eliminated on a consistent basis. The website allows for changes to be made to keep up with current policies.

The limitations of my Capstone project are influences that I was not able to control. These included, for example, my funding for creation of the website, research findings, and the statistics used in my population studies. The need in my building may have been extended to include the need for web-based resources in other buildings other than here say. While I believe what I have created is helpful and the responses from many schools would have been the same, it would be better to verify my belief. Including other buildings would also give me an opportunity to see if educators or administrators in other schools have resources or ideas I could implement as well.

Further Research

I am able to maintain the website as long as I have access to the district webpages, basically, as long as I am employed by the school district. Since the website is part of my

assigned teacher website, I am the site manager and can make deletions, changes, updates and respond to feedback. On the workspace site, where I developed the website, the district has a line graph that records the total number of visits per site, per month. I will be able to track each site and view pending comments or feedback.

My colleague has developed a capstone project entitled, “The Impact of Trauma in Refugees: Resources for Educators.” The importance of this project is that it dovetails with my project. Her project contains a PowerPoint presentation for staff in her building. The website I have created will be an additional resource for her staff. In the future, I can see us collaborating on a presentation for other buildings in the district with interest in trauma in refugee and immigrant students. The PowerPoint and website will be utilized by all who have a stake in the well-being of traumatized refugee and immigrant students.

In my building and district, giving this information to staff is just the beginning. After receiving this information, staff will begin practicing trauma aware strategies in their classrooms and assessing the results. For example, educators and administrators could pilot some differentiation strategies and see if academic or social production increases. A teacher may offer the opportunity to meet outside of class so a student might present much needed information orally instead of a written report. Administrators may be surveyed and building-wide trauma awareness practices could be assessed for aiding the students in need. This may shed light on regulation strategies or coping mechanisms that students are gaining or lacking. Basically, the information I researched is valuable for my school, but there is still much more knowledge to acquire.

Conclusion

The goal of my Capstone Project was to assist with the needs of the educators and administrators in my school by answering the question: *How can I provide a web-based resource for educators and administrators to learn more about traumatized refugee and immigrant students?* To facilitate answering this question, I gathered research material to help me create this website. In addition, I found the best web design for facilitation in my school district by using the district based website. The website will give the educators and administrators information and suggestions that will aid them as they work with potentially traumatized refugee, immigrant, and native-born English learners. It is my hope that this website will help this population at the classroom level and ignite positive solution conversations amongst teachers at the school level. The first step to aid in the success of traumatized English learners in our building is to educate ourselves and my website will help educators and administrators begin this process.

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Appendix A

UN Refugee Resettlement Facts

 UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency	There are more than 21.3 million refugees in the world	86% Of the world's refugees are hosted by developing countries	Top host countries include: 1. Turkey (2.8 mil) 2. Pakistan (1.6 mil) 3. Lebanon (1.1 mil)
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REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT FACTS

Refugee: A person forced to flee their home country to escape persecution, war, or violence.

Resettlement: The careful selection by governments such as the U.S. – for purposes of lawful admission – of vulnerable refugees who can neither return to their home country nor live in safety in neighboring countries.

HOW DO REFUGEES GET RESETTLED?



During standard registration interviews UNHCR flags vulnerable cases for possible resettlement. **Refugees cannot apply for resettlement.**



UNHCR refers only the most vulnerable cases to host countries for possible resettlement. **Refugees cannot pick their country of resettlement.**



Only recognized refugees whose **life, liberty, safety, health, or other fundamental rights are at risk** in the host country are considered for resettlement.



Persons found to have committed serious crimes or who might pose a threat to others **would not be referred** for resettlement in another country.

Vulnerability categories include:



•WOMEN & GIRLS AT RISK
•SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE
AND/OR TORTURE



•FAMILY REUNIFICATION
•MEDICAL NEEDS
•CHILDREN AT RISK



GLOBAL RESETTLEMENT BY THE NUMBERS:

Less than
1%
of the world's refugees
are ever resettled.

More than
30
countries around
the world currently
accept refugees for
resettlement.

140,000
Refugee resettlement
spaces were made
available by those
governments in 2016

8%
of the global refugee
population is in need
of resettlement

RESETTLEMENT TO THE UNITED STATES

The United States has an exceptional history of welcoming refugees and is the top resettlement country in the world. Since 1975, the U.S. government has welcomed **over 3 million refugees** for resettlement from all over the world, and these refugees have built new lives and homes in all 50 states.

UNHCR screens and interviews each resettlement candidate. The United States then conducts its own vetting process and the U.S. alone decides whether to accept a refugee for resettlement. **The entire process is conducted abroad, can take up to 2 years, and involves:**

8 U.S. Federal Government Agencies	6 Different security databases	5 Separate background checks	4 Biometric security checks	3 Separate in-person interviews	2 Inter-agency security checks
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After the U.S. government approves refugees for resettlement, each case is assigned to one of nine NGOs (six of which are faith-based) by the U.S. Department of State. That NGO helps them find work, integrate into their new communities, and adjust to life in the United States.

UNHCR refers a vulnerable refugee for resettlement

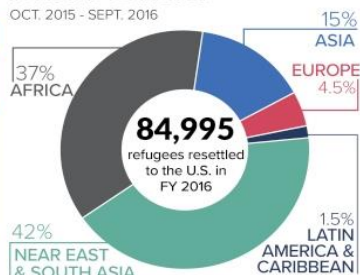
U.S. government screens the refugee and determines whether it would like to admit them for resettlement

The State Department assigns the case to one of 9 agencies



REGION OF ORIGIN FOR REFUGEES RESETTLED TO THE UNITED STATES IN FISCAL YEAR 2016

OCT. 2015 - SEPT. 2016



TOP STATES FOR RESETTLEMENT IN FISCAL YEAR 2016

1	CALIFORNIA
2	TEXAS
3	MICHIGAN
4	WASHINGTON
5	NEW YORK
6	ARIZONA
7	ILLINOIS
8	VIRGINIA
9	NEBRASKA
10	TENNESSEE

Appendix B

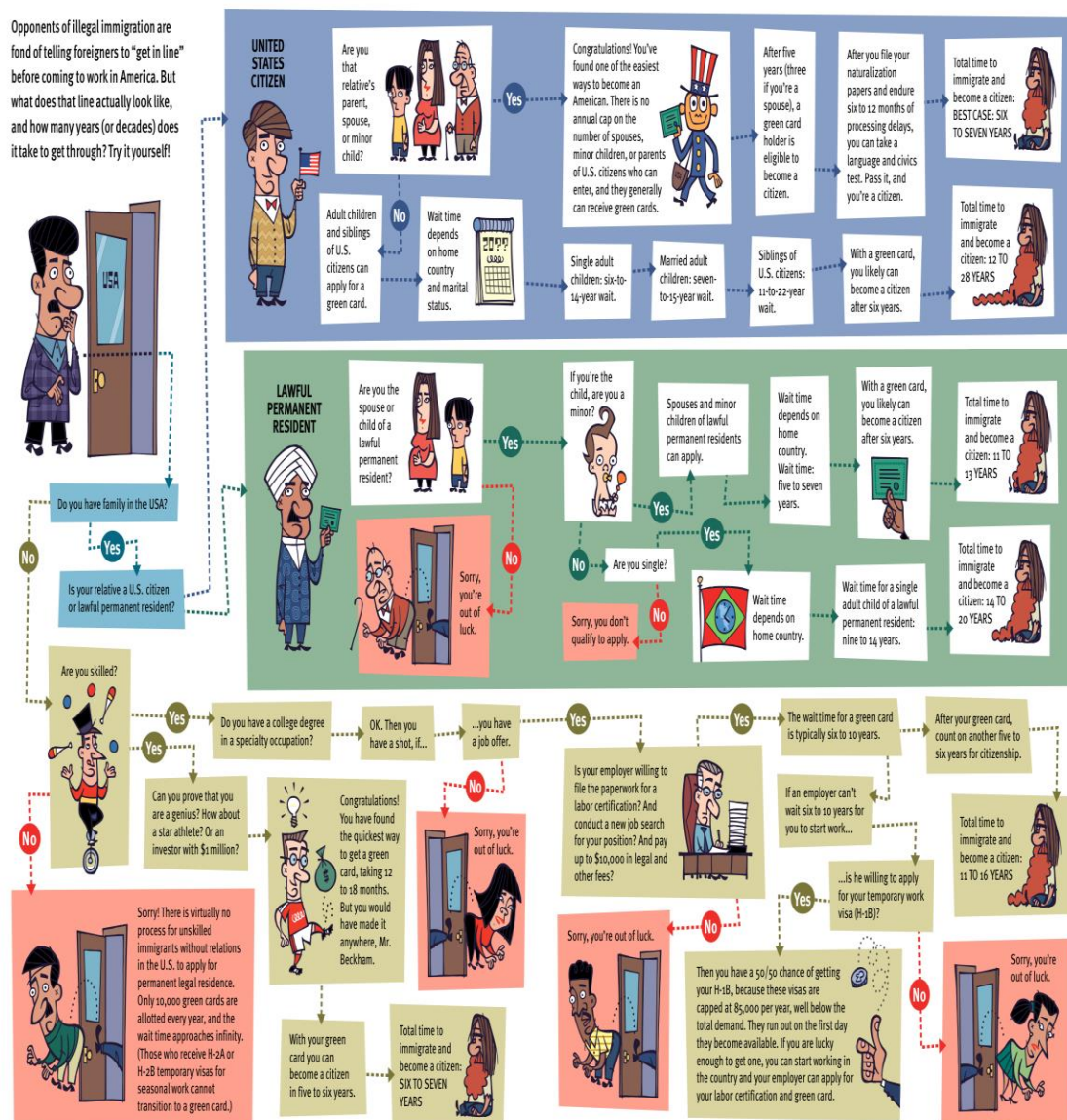
Immigration Vetting Flow Chart

Reason magazine, October 2008 Issue

What Part of Legal Immigration Don't You Understand? Mike Flynn and Shikha Dalmia

Illustrated by Terry Colon

Opponents of illegal immigration are fond of telling foreigners to "get in line" before coming to work in America. But what does that line actually look like, and how many years (or decades) does it take to get through? Try it yourself!



(Flynn is director of government affairs and Dalmia is a senior policy analyst at Reason Foundation. This chart was developed by Reason Foundation in collaboration with the National Foundation for American Policy.)

Appendix C

Screen Shot of Website Home Page

ADAMS ELEMENTARY

SCHOOLS DIRECTORY CALENDAR

ABOUT US ACADEMICS ACTIVITIES SUPPORT INVOLVEMENT COMMUNITY ED

Adams Elementary School /

Houstman, Christine M

- Home
- Trauma in Refugee & Immigrant Students

Resources overview

This page contains web-based resources intended for educators and administrators of traumatized refugee and immigrant students.

- [Calmer Classrooms: A Guide to Working with Traumatized Children.](#)

Adams Elementary School

8989 Sycamore St. NW | Coon Rapids, MN 55433 | P: 763-506-1600 | F: 763-506-1603 | adams@ahschools.us

TRANSLATE

Appendix D

Screen Shot of Link to Capstone Sample

The screenshot shows the website for Adams Elementary School. The header features the school's logo (a phoenix) and name "ADAMS ELEMENTARY" in a red banner. Navigation links include SCHOOLS, DIRECTORY, and CALENDAR. A secondary navigation bar lists categories: ABOUT US, ACADEMICS, ACTIVITIES, SUPPORT, INVOLVEMENT, and COMMUNITY ED. The main content area is titled "Houstman, Christine M" and displays a capstone sample titled "Background of refugees and immigrants in America". The sample includes a table of contents with links to Home, Trauma in Refugee & Immigrant Students, Literature review, Background of refugees and immigrants, State and national implications, Challenges to educating refugee/immigrant students, and Strategies for educating refugee/immigrant students. The text of the capstone discusses the background of refugees and immigrants in America, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), and the definition of trauma.

ADAMS ELEMENTARY

SCHOOLS DIRECTORY CALENDAR

ABOUT US ACADEMICS ACTIVITIES SUPPORT INVOLVEMENT COMMUNITY ED

Adams Elementary School /

Houstman, Christine M

- Home
- Trauma in Refugee & Immigrant Students
- Literature review
 - Background of refugees and immigrants
 - State and national implications
 - Challenges to educating refugee/immigrant students
 - Strategies for educating refugee/immigrant students

Background of refugees and immigrants in America

In order to consider the background of refugees and immigrants in the United States, it helps to understand the definition of these terms. An immigrant, by definition, is someone who moves permanently to another country (Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 2016). While America often defines itself as a "nation of immigrants," our history of settlement and slavery challenges this narrative. Throughout our history, U.S. laws have excluded some people, based on their race or nationality, from immigration and citizenship. Episodes of Japanese Internment (during World War II) and mass deportation of people of Mexican heritage (during the depression and later in the 1950s) do not support community responses to the rhetoric of today.

According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the Immigration and Nationality Act, or INA, was created in 1952. Prior to INA, a variety of statutes governed immigration law but they had never been organized in one location. The McCarran-Walter bill of 1952, Public Law No. 82-414, collected and classified 13 many existing provisions and reorganized the framework of immigration law. This Act has been amended multiple times but remains the foundation of immigration law.

According to the USCIS, a refugee is someone living outside of the United States but who is not established in another country, is of humanitarian concern to the U.S., and it can be demonstrated that he or she had been persecuted, or feared persecution, due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a social group (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2017). Of course, these broad definitions can be broken down into several specific categories. However, people in either of these groups may have experienced trauma. It is imperative not to make assumptions about an individual or family member's history based on his or her immigration status. However, defining these terms is helpful when assessing areas of potential trauma.

Trauma has been defined as events that "overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning...they confront human beings with the extremities of helplessness and terror and evoke the responses of catastrophe" (Herman, 1997, p.34). Because trauma is defined by the way a person reacts to events, trauma to one person may not be trauma to another. Some people can cope with the trauma and move forward quickly. However, many trauma survivors continue to struggle with their sense of control, connection, and meaning for the majority of their

Appendix E

Screen Shot of Website Resources for Educators: Example A

